

EXECUTIVE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON

THURSDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2017

Councillors Present: Dominic Boeck, Anthony Chadley, Keith Chopping, Jeanette Clifford, Hilary Cole, Lynne Doherty, Marcus Franks and Graham Jones

Also Present: Paul Anstey (Head of Public Protection and Culture), Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Robert O'Reilly (Head of Human Resources), Mary Page (Adult Complaints and Public Liaison Manager), Peta Stoddart-Crompton (Public Relations Officer), Rachael Wardell (Corporate Director - Communities), Stephen Chard (Principal Policy Officer), Councillor Lee Dillon, Councillor Mollie Lock, Councillor Alan Macro and Gabrielle Mancini (Group Executive - Conservatives)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: John Ashworth, Councillor Billy Drummond, Councillor James Fredrickson and Councillor Rick Jones

PART I

39. Minutes

Councillor Graham Jones opened the meeting by congratulating Councillor Dominic Boeck on the birth of his grandson on 18 October 2017.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2017 and the Special meeting held on 28 September 2017 were approved as true and correct records and signed by the Leader.

40. Declarations of Interest

During the course of responding to a Member question on the Council's efforts to minimise the risks of Brexit, Councillor Graham Jones declared an interest in Agenda Item 7(d) as he was the owner of one of the number of small businesses he referred to in West Berkshire, but reported that, as his interest was a personal or a other registrable interest, but not a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the debate on the matter.

41. Public Questions

A full transcription of the public and Member question and answer sessions are available from the following link: [Transcription of Q&As](#).

(a) **Question submitted by Mrs Pearl Baker to the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services**

A question standing in the name of Mrs Pearl Baker on the subject of the formula used by the Council when applying exempt status re Supported Accommodation and reclaiming a Housing Benefit Subsidy back from the DWP would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services as Mrs Baker was unable to attend the meeting.

(b) **Question submitted by Mrs Pearl Baker to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care**

A question standing in the name of Mrs Pearl Baker on the subject of whether the support to Garland Court in Newbury was funded by the local authority in the form of Floating Support would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care as Mrs Baker was unable to attend the meeting.

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(c) **Question submitted by Mrs Pearl Baker to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care**

A question standing in the name of Mrs Pearl Baker on the subject of how residents living at Garland Court subject to Section 117 free alternative aftercare were identified and provided with free aftercare including accommodation as per the Care Act 2014 would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care as Mrs Baker was unable to attend the meeting.

(d) **Question submitted by Ms Elizabeth Nonweiler to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Young People**

A question standing in the name of Ms Elizabeth Nonweiler on the subject of whether the Council had plans for improving the teaching of phonics in local authority schools in West Berkshire was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Young People.

42. **Petitions**

There were no petitions presented to the Executive.

43. **Leasing the Hungerford Library building to Hungerford Town Council to increase community benefit (EX3371)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 6) concerning a proposal from Hungerford Town Council to take on the lease of the Hungerford Library building so that the Town Council could develop a range of community activities and the Council could maintain the Library Service in the area whilst meeting the savings target for the service.

Councillor Dominic Boeck explained that this proposal would form part of the Council's plans to save £690k from the overall Library Service in 2017/18. The identification of this sum followed a detailed review. The implementation of the new Library Service commenced on 3 July 2017.

In terms of Hungerford Library specifically, the net cost of operating the library for 2017/18 was £33k (a saving of £28.5k on the 2016/17 cost following a reduction in staffing), on the proviso that Hungerford Town Council made an annual contribution of £5.5k which was based on the local population (equivalent to approximately £1 per resident). This was the contribution being sought from all parishes as part of the Council's plans for the new Library Service.

Hungerford Town Council, after considering this request, came forward with the proposal, in conjunction with the Friends of Hungerford Library, to transfer the lease of the library to themselves. They would form a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) that would take on the responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the library within the framework of the Library Service. Approval of the Town Council's proposal would enable the staffing level prior to 2017/18 to be re-established and maintained. It would also bring the net cost incurred by West Berkshire Council to £31k for 2017/18 (a saving of £30.8k).

Councillor Boeck gave his support to the Town Council's proposal as it would achieve benefits for all parties concerned and would achieve additional savings. He proposed acceptance of the recommendations to agree to this proposal in principle, the detail of the agreement could then be pursued and costs finalised prior to final approval. Councillor Boeck added that he felt this was an excellent example of communities working with West Berkshire Council for the benefit of local residents. Specifically, it reflected the friendly relationship that had been established between West Berkshire Council and Hungerford Town Council.

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Councillor Graham Jones seconded the proposal, he endorsed the approach that had been developed and the community benefits it would bring.

Councillor Hilary Cole explained that she commenced the process of reviewing the Library Service when she was the previous Portfolio Holder and she expressed her delight at the progress that had been made for Hungerford Library. She gave thanks to Councillor Boeck, Officers, Hungerford Town Council and the Friends of Hungerford Library for all their work. Councillor Cole also gave special thanks to Mr Keith Knight of Hungerford Town Council. Mr Knight played a big part in championing this initiative from the outset and it would achieve an outstanding benefit for the residents of Hungerford in an area of importance to the local community.

Councillor Marcus Franks commented that this was a great example of the devolution agenda working well, enabling this service to be enhanced to help meet the needs of the local community. He highlighted that a bid had been made to the Community Solutions Fund to help take this forward. Finally, Councillor Franks stated that Devolution was on the agenda for discussion at the District Parish Conference being held on 7 November 2017.

Councillor Alan Macro noted that the library would be operated by a CIO, but he queried what would happen in the event that the CIO was unable to continue and how West Berkshire Council would respond in ensuring that the service continued to operate.

Councillor Macro also noted that the CIO would be eligible for the mandatory 80% rate reduction and were likely to also be eligible for the extra 20% discretionary rate relief under the current policy criteria. Therefore, while savings would be achieved, reduced rates would impact on the Council's finances. Councillor Macro sought clarity as to whether the CIO's business plan was reliant upon receiving the extra 20% discretionary rate relief.

Councillor Boeck clarified that the CIO was working on the assumption that they would receive the additional 20% of discretionary rate relief. In response to the question in relation to the CIO's sustainability, he stated that West Berkshire Council would support the Town Council/the Library in achieving an alternative and sustainable business model should this prove necessary.

Councillor Macro requested that the agreement documented the actions that would be taken should the CIO fold.

Councillor Boeck reiterated that the Executive was being asked to agree to the proposal in principle at this stage. The final agreement would be signed off under a delegated decision or by the Executive as necessary. However, Councillor Boeck agreed that he would take Councillor Macro's comments on board when finalising the agreement.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) The Executive agree to grant the leasehold of the Hungerford Library building on a 99 year lease at a peppercorn rent for the purposes of library and other community uses subject to:
 - a short period of public consultation in the Hungerford area followed by a Stage 2 Equalities Impact Assessment to assess whether the proposal has any negative impacts for the public.
 - agreements on the Heads of Terms of the freehold transfer to ensure that the arrangement meets the saving in the libraries budget while facilitating greater community use of the building. With consideration given to safeguards that would be put in place should the CIO fold.
 - final approval by the Council's Executive – or by a delegated decision (as required).

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- (2) The Executive make this in principle decision so that HTC can progress their proposal and West Berkshire Council can make the budget saving required for the Library Service.

Other options considered:

- Continuing with the current arrangements. This would not deliver the increase in usage for community activities and not engage with HTC is a long-term and sustainable solution for the Library Service and the building.
- Selling the building on the open market would reduce community amenity for residents. The site is centrally located off the centre of the High Street and therefore accessible to all residents.

44. Members' Questions

A full transcription of the public and Member question and answer sessions are available from the following link: [Transcription of Q&As](#).

- (a) **Question to be answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Leisure submitted by Councillor Alan Macro**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Alan Macro on the subject of the Council's powers to reduce the loss of office space to residential space in the district was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Leisure.

- (b) **Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Leisure by Councillor Alan Macro**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Alan Macro on the subject of the protection given to rough sleepers during the winter was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Leisure.

- (c) **Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Councillor Lee Dillon**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Lee Dillon on the subject of what analysis the Council had undertaken on the impact of Brexit to the local economy was answered by the Leader of the Council.

- (d) **Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Councillor Lee Dillon**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Lee Dillon on the subject of what the Council was doing to mitigate the risks of Brexit was answered by the Leader of the Council.

- (e) **Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Leisure by Councillor Alan Macro**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Alan Macro on the subject of whether the recently announced delays to the Sterling Cable site had put at jeopardy the external funding for this project was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport.

(The meeting commenced at 5.00pm and closed at 5.34pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature